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PEOPLE & THINGS

By ATTICUS

WHEN seen from the Press Gallery, the House of Commons looks like an enormous Gothic swimming-bath with the water blocked out. As I sat there on the first day of the new session and watched Member after Member stand shivering on the brink, I could not help wondering who would sink, in this least predictable of places, and who would swim on, in two or ten or twenty years, to the Treasury Bench.

What style, I wondered, most commonly leads to success? The House has, of course, many masters of the Crawl. Nor is Trudgen's Thrust, or the Butterfly Stroke, without its champions. And as for the practice, elsewhere obsolete, of Plunging—variations upon it are an essential part of supplementary questions.

Apt Allusion

FEW Members, as it seemed to me, now attempt the classic, near-conversational Lower House manner. Perhaps it is elsewhere that the echoes from Pope and Horace are bandied about? Or perhaps one should go to constituency meetings for the pleasures of apt allusion? I hear, for instance, that Mr. Charles Fletcher-Cooke recently gave a Tennysonian timbre to a discussion on slum clearance. Not in *his* constituency, he declared, would visitors find "the crowded couch of incest Midst the warrens of the poor."

He was encouraged by the success of this striking image to conclude his references to U.N.O. with a quotation from a living poet, Mr. W. H. Auden. "The last word on how we may live or die," he assured his hearers, "rests today with such quiet Men, working too hard in rooms that are too big."

Poet's Memorial

THE Globe Theatre could have been sold out several times over for this evening's "Homage to Dylan Thomas," which is being sponsored by THE SUNDAY TIMES and presented by the Group Theatre.

I feel sure that there will also be a very large public for the Arts Council's Dylan Thomas Memorial Recital, which will take place at the Royal Festival Hall at three o'clock on the afternoon of Sunday, February 14. Miss Peggy Ashcroft, Dame Sybil Thorndike, Sir Lewis Casson, Mr. Emlyn Williams, Mr. Cecil Day Lewis, Mr. Michael Hordern and Mr. Christopher Hassall will take part in this programme, of which the profits will be given to the Dylan Thomas Memorial Fund. The sponsoring bodies also include the P.E.N. Club and the National Book League.

Admirers of Dylan Thomas will also find great nourishment in the special number of the international review "Adam," which is devoted entirely to the poet and includes an essay by Stravinsky, with whom Thomas was to have collaborated on an opera, and two chapters from an unpublished novel.

Dame Edith

WITH the entry into rehearsals of Mr. Christopher Fry's new play, "The Dark is Light Enough," London has temporarily lost one of its most tireless pedestrians: for it is Dame Edith Evans's regular practice when not working in the theatre to set out from Albany on a walk of heroic proportions.

Dauntless as Amundsen among the floes, and scorning both compass and sextant, Dame Edith may be descried each morning, heading eastward through Covent Garden, Fleet Street and the City, and branching back along the river. It is therefore with particular excitement that I look forward to hearing her read, at the Globe Theatre this evening, Dylan Thomas's "Ceremony After a Fire Raid," with its marvellous evocation of "the dead clock burning the hour" in the molten city.

Hand Across the Sea

ANOTHER great metropolitan walker is Judge Learned Hand, who has just been elected to the Athenaeum under Rule 2.

Judge Learned Hand

Until his retirement in 1951, at the age of seventy-nine, Judge Hand used to walk half the length of Manhattan Island, morning and evening, from his Anglicised brown-stone house on East 65th Street to the United States Court House in Foley Square.

Judge Hand's European friends, who include his distinguished contemporaries Bertrand Russell and Bernard Berenson, have always prized him for his kindliness and Socratic humour.

On occasion, however, during the near-thirty years of his appointment as Senior Judge of the Federal Court of Appeals, the Judge's monumental features struck terror and awe into his junior colleagues. At least one promising lawyer is said, in fact, to have heeled over in a faint on first meeting his gaze.

Shikari

WHEN Sir Harold Caccia leaves Vienna tomorrow, after more than four years as British High Commissioner in Austria, he will be regretted not only as the most assiduous of administrators, but as an outstanding shot. Sir Harold, I hear, has attended ninety-one of the ninety-seven meetings of the Allied Council in Vienna. With the aid of an electronic brain, I have calculated that he must have talked, argued, wrangled, and occasionally agreed with his Russian colleagues for a total of nearly 300 hours in the last three years.

Sir Harold's exploits in the field are on a comparable scale. In 1953, for instance, his victims included ten roebuck, five chamois, four stags, a bustard, a capercailzie and (a hazard unpredicted in Johann Strauss's famous waltz) a wild boar in the Vienna Woods. After this, it is hardly surprising that, whenever Sir Harold had something confidential to discuss with Dr. Figl, he began with the words "Now this is under the seal of the Huntsman's Oath of secrecy. . . ."

A Good Pull-up

AN international conference means money for restaurateurs, and I do not doubt that many famous houses in Berlin are now hoping for bumper business. It is not only, however, the Park Hotel and the Maison de France which will profit. The more individual methods of Gerhard Heinrich may also prove their worth.

"Fatty Heinrich," who is thirty-seven years old and weighs eighteen stone, was Rommel's cook in the Afrika Korps from Alamein to Tripoli. He began life as a restaurateur in a very small way—by patrolling Berlin's West End at night with a portable boiler for frankfurter sausages strapped round his waist. By 1950 he could afford a table; a pasteboard hut was his next investment; and now Fatty Heinrich's all-night snack-bars and coffee-stalls, where shashliks and curried stew can be bought over the counter for one-and-eightpence, are known to every noctambulist.

In his dealings with the police, Fatty has shown powers of diplomacy which would be welcome in the conference room. In his culinary sympathies, moreover, he is staunchly Anglophile: "I found my first tin of curry in a shot-up British tank," he says, "and I use the same brand today."

Veterans

I HEAR that the official dinner which is to follow the Rugger international between England and New Zealand on January 30 will have at any rate one very unusual feature: the Rugby Football Union has sent an invitation to the six surviving members of the team which played for England against New Zealand in the first match of its kind—at the Crystal Palace (in those days the Twickenham ground did not exist), on December 2, 1905.

The survivors are V. H. Cartwright (Nottingham), the captain, General Sir Basil Hill, K.B.E., C.B., D.S.O. (Blackheath), C. E. L. Hammond (Harlequins), R. E. Godfrey (Richmond), R. F. Russell (Leicester), and my colleague, D. R. Gent (Gloucester).

Mr. Gent tells me that when he landed at Wellington, New Zealand, in May, 1950, with the British touring side, he was entertained to dinner by seven survivors of the New Zealand side.

Reason Why Not

LIKE many other people, I have immensely enjoyed reading Mrs. Woodham-Smith's "The Reason Why." And my flesh, like theirs, is still creeping at the superhuman effrontery of the 7th Earl of Cardigan, who slept on board his yacht at Balaclava while men and horses endured a night-long agony on the heights above.

I have not, however, carried my indignation to the lengths affected by a friend of mine whom I recently saw leaving a Jermyn Street outfitters and stowing a large parcel in the boot of his car. "*Waistcoats*," he said meaningfully. "No more cardigans for me—not since I've read 'The Reason Why.'"